

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 0772

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, NATO, GR
SUBJ: PAPANDREOU ON NATO

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. LAST WEEK A GROUP OF SEVEN PANHALLENIC SOCIALIST
MOVEMENT (PASOK) DEPUTIES TABLED A QUESTION IN
PARLIAMENT ASKING THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE TO SEEK
REVISION OF ARTICLE V OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY
SO THAT GREECE WOULD BE PROTECTED IN THE EVENT OF AN
ATTACK BY A MEMBER STATE AS WELL AS A NONMEMBER.
RIZOSPASTIS, THE NEWSPAPER OF THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED
COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE (KKE-EXTERIOR), SUBSEQUENTLY
CRITICIZED PASOK FOR THIS ACTION, ARGUING THAT IT
REVERSED PASOK'S PREVIOUS POSITION ON NATO, AND
ACCUSED PASOK OF SEEKING TO ESTABLISH "A SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE ALLIANCE.

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2. OVER THE WEEKEND PASOK LEADER PAPANDREOU ISSUED A
STATEMENT IN WHICH HE, IN TURN, ATTACKED THE KKE-EXTERIOR,
AND CONDEMNED PRO-NEW DEMOCRACY NEWSPAPERS WHICH HAD PICKED UP
THE STORY FOR SLANDERING PASOK. HE REITERATED PASOK'S "IRREVERSIBLE"
POSITION THAT GREECE SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM BOTH THE MILITARY AND
POLITICAL WINGS OF NATO. PAPANDREOU CLAIMED THAT THE
PURPOSE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION BY THE PASOK

DEPUTIES WAS SIMPLY TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO TELL THE PEOPLE WHAT NATO'S ROLE WAS IN DEFENDING GREECE. ANY REPLY BY THE GOVERNMENT, HE MAINTAINED, WOULD MAKE CLEAR TO THE PEOPLE THAT THE ALLIANCE WOULD NOT AUTOMATICALLY COME TO GREECE'S DEFENSE IN THE EVENT OF AN ATTACK. THUS NATO'S PROTECTION OF GREECE WAS ONLY "HYPOTHETICAL".

3. PAPANDREOU WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE STATUS OF FOREIGN BASES IN GREECE WAS CONNECTED "INSEPARABLY" WITH GREECE'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MILITARY WING OF NATO. THUS GREECE'S WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO'S MILITARY WING, HE CONCLUDED, ENTAILS THE CLOSING OF THE BASES AS WELL.
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4. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT PAPANDREOU HAS LINKED THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF US BASES IN GREECE (WHICH HE OPPOSES) TO THE STATUS OF GREECE'S MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO. BUT ASIDE FROM REAFFIRMING PASOK'S OPPOSITION TO NATO, PAPANDREOU'S LATEST STATEMENT SEEMS DESIGNED ALSO TO IMPROVE HIS IMAGE AMONG NON-COMMUNISTS. HE HAS CLASHED WITH THE COMMUNISTS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS RECENTLY AND, FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE, THIS IS ALL TO THE GOOD. FOR HE MUST OVERCOME THE TENDENCE OF MANY GREEKS -- INCLUDING
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MOST OF THE OFFICER CORPS -- TO LUMP HIM IN THE SAME BAG AS THE COMMUNISTS. THIS LATEST CLASH GAINED FOR HIM EXACTLY THE SORT OF PUBLICITY HE WANTS AND, WE SUSPECT, WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.
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